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SUBJECT: IRAQ; ALLEGED US ESPIONAGE; HUMAN RIGHTS; EVO MORALES;
VENEZUELA; DOHA ROUND; MUSLIM-WESTERN DISPUTES; ARGENTINE JUDICIAL
SECURITY; KIRCHNER TO SPAIN US-SPANISH TIES 06/26/06

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's key international stories include the alleged preparation for US troop withdrawal from Iraq; former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's statement that US President Bush will ask for his help in fighting the insurgency in Iraq; a new espionage scandal in the US; the relationship between respect for human rights and US national security strategies; ties between the US and Bolivia; Venezuela's candidacy for a UN chair; expectations for the upcoming Doha Round; the reason for Muslim-Western disputes; and Argentina's judicial security status.

2. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

- "Iraq - the US prepares its withdrawal in 2008"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" reports (06/26) "According to the US media, after more than three years of military occupation, the Pentagon has drafted a calendar for a drastic reduction of US troops in Iraq by the end of next year, and it has also planned a withdrawal of most of its troops by 2008.

"According to The New York Times, which had access to classified documents, the plan proposed by the US commander in charge of the US coalition forces, General George Casey, which was submitted during a secret Pentagon meeting last week, the number of US fighting

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brigades in Iraq will be lowered from 14 to five or six in December 2007 if security conditions in Iraq allow it. Some 7,000 soldiers will be withdrawn in September this year."

- "Saddam says 'Bush will ask for my help against insurgents'"

Conservative "La Prensa" reports (06/26) "On the same day Iraqi PM al Maliki launched a national reconciliation plan with several religious and tribal groups, former president Saddam Hussein said he is convinced that the US will ask for his 'help' to suffocate the insurgency and execute an orderly withdrawal of troops.

"Through his main legal attorney, Khalil al-Dulaimi, the overthrown leader said 'those Iraqi puppets the US put in government cannot protect themselves, they can barely protect the people. This is why they will ask for my help and that of the Baath Party so that we can rescue them from their huge dilemma.'"

- "New espionage scandal in the US"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (06/24) "According to The New

York Times and The Los Angeles Times, during the last four years, the Bush administration has monitored and reviewed tens of thousands of banking operations and financial records of people with alleged terrorist ties, but without previous judicial authorization.

"The secret program, which was authorized by Bush weeks a few weeks after the September 11 attacks, is aimed at detecting terrorists and cutting their finance networks. However, just like the wiretapping scandal, this has unleashed serious doubts about its legality, even among banking executives involved, and a controversy due to the USG's advances into private life."

- "End for human rights enforcement?"

Oscar Raul Cardoso, international analyst of leading "Clarín," opines (06/24) "... If the most powerful country in the world arrests people depriving them of any right to legal process and defense, if it tortures or hires others to torture in third countries, if it suspiciously kills in the name of freedom, why wouldn't other democracies do it with the same 'legitimacy'? Is this, as suggested some time ago by academician Harvard Michael Ignatieff, the end of the 'human rights era'? "Curiously enough, George W. Bush's main reason for these adventures is the defense of Americans' security.

"... The key question is not who is hiding in the Afghan heights or the Iraqi sand but what the West is doing to generate this intense hatred. And, above all, what price the West is willing to pay in decency and human rights for its own security, which as we can see is weakly guaranteed today by the atrocities of occupying powers in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a question that not only calls for the response of Americans but for that of the global community."

- "Our patience with Evo is running out"

Conservative "La Prensa" (06/26) reports "The US warned 'its patience is running out' in regards to Bolivian President Evo Morales because it fears that the call on a Constituting Assembly

can be used to impose 'potentially anti-democratic reforms.' "The spokesperson of the USG's malaise was Adolfo Franco, head of the Latin American Department at the US Agency for International Development.

"... The USG official suggested that, as a response to Morales' advance, Washington should support the opposition in an attempt to make up 'some counterweight to the control of only one political party in both judicial affairs and in the independence of the mass media, in addition to the training of leaders of a strong and educated civil society.'"

- "Venezuela is heading for the UN"

Conservative "La Prensa" carries an opinion piece by Emilio Cardenas, former Argentine Ambassador to the UN, who writes (06/25) "Our country has just announced that it will support Venezuela's candidacy as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council during the 2007/08 period. In this way, Argentina preferred Venezuela over another candidate from the region, Guatemala, a founding country of the UN.

"... Hugo Chavez's lack of respect for the principle of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries is open and noteworthy... The cases of Venezuelan intervention in Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru are well-known. But there are some other cases, which are still 'subterranean' although real.

"I am one of those who believe that, based on caution and a basic respect for ourselves..., we should not support Venezuela's candidacy for a UN chair based on the concerning features of Chavez's personality and also on Venezuela's closeness to (Iran), a country which is the main exporter of terrorism to the world."

- "Update on family quarrel"

Gwynne Dyer, contributor to liberal, English-language "Buenos Aires Herald," writes (06/26) "The past year has been one of the worst in

recent history for relations between Muslims and 'the West'... According to the Pew Global Attitude Project for 2006, an opinion survey conducted in thirteen mainly Christian or Muslim countries by the Pew Research Center in Washington, the majorities who saw relations between the West and Islam as 'generally bad' ranged from 53 percent in Russia and Indonesia to highs of 70 percent in Germany and 84 percent in Turkey.

"There were purely local causes for some of the extreme reactions, like resentment among Turks at being seen as problem candidates for EU membership simply because they are Muslims.

"... Muslim-Western disputes are so emotional precisely because they are between family members; neither of the estranged twin cultures brings the same amount of reproach and resentment to its occasional disputes with peoples who belong to entirely different traditions. But the fact that they do share so much history and so many values means that the possibility of reconciliation is also ever present."

- "(Kirchner's) criterion about investment and judicial security"

Fernando Laborda, political columnist of daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (06/25) "... The Argentine Government's thesis is that 'the country's judicial security is that of a country whose growth has not stopped during the last 44 months.' However, according to business sources, this view, which is based on the fact that capital flows to where there are business opportunities regardless of the risk that rules can change overnight, has notorious limitations.

"In recent months, not a few businessmen have complained about the president's particular view of state intervention, which is not related to old-fashioned statism but to the government's direct or indirect pressure to remove heads of strategic economic divisions that can't easily satisfy governmental requests. This same pressure has led foreign economic groups to abandon control of privatized companies and who were compelled to sell their shares to groups that are more compatible with the Government.

"Behind this interventionist view there is a veiled purpose to politically control any potential factor of power, whether it be economic, social, military, religious or press-related."

- "Kirchner returned from Spain with a new reputation of 'moderate' and ready for the 2007 project"

Centrist newspaper "Perfil" carries an opinion piece by Rosendo Fraga, prestigious political analyst, who writes (06/25) "President

Kirchner's key in regional policy during the first three years of his government has been to maintain an intermediate point between Lula and Chavez... Kirchner combines populism and pragmatism in an alternating way.

"In this framework, his visit to Spain is one more demonstration of this kind of policy. It is true that in his address to Spanish businessmen, he showed more moderation than in previous opportunities, but it is also true that in political terms he ended his visit with harsh criticism of the US and a defense of Chavez and Morales.

"Perhaps, he did not bear in mind that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Madrid two days before him, and that she reached some agreement with her Spanish counterpart, Miguel Angel Moratinos, regarding the possibility of coordinating more actions of the two countries in Latin America. Washington is obviously the regional hegemonic power in the region, and Spain is the EU country having the largest influence there. The visit meant one more step toward a better relationship between the two countries."

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